

CLAIMS

1. A method to stabilize the beating heart comprising the steps of:

contacting at least one section of the beating heart with a stabilizing means,  
exerting a force on the stabilizing means.]

2. [The method of claim 1 wherein the at least one section of the beating heart is the target artery of an anastomosis.]

3. [The method of claim 1 wherein the stabilizing means is comprised of two substantially planar contact members.]

4. [The method of claim 2 wherein the contact members further comprise a friction means on a bottom surface of the contact member.]

5. [The method of claim 1 further comprises attaching the stabilizing means to a fixed support to maintain the stabilizing force while an anastomosis is completed.]

6. [The method of claim 5 wherein the stable support is a surgical rib retractor.]

1. A method to install a coronary artery bypass graft from a source artery to a target coronary artery while the heart is beating comprising the steps of:

- 1) providing an access space to the beating heart by a surgical procedure selected from the group consisting of a thoracotomy and a sternotomy,
- 2) introducing a stabilizing means through the access space,
- 3) contacting the surface of the beating heart proximate to the target artery at an anastomosis with a stabilizing means,
- 4) exerting a stabilizing force on the beating heart by positioning the stabilizing means,
- 5) restricting blood flow through the target artery while allowing the heart to continue to beat,
- 6) sewing an anastomosis to the target artery,
- 7) re-establishing blood flow through the target artery.

8. A device for use in a cardiovascular surgery on the beating heart comprising:

**ANNEXED**

a means for stabilizing the beating heart comprising contact members shaped to engage the surface of the beating heart, said contact members attached to a shaft means.

9. The device of claim 8 further comprising <sup>Means</sup> ~~an attachment~~ for anchoring said shaft means to a stable support.

10. ) The device of claim 9 further comprising friction means on the bottom surface of said contact members. ]

11. [ The device of claim 10 wherein said shaft means is comprised of a rigid shaft having a push block affixed at the end thereof, wherein said push block engages a ball joint proximate to said contact members. ]

12. [ The device of claim 11 wherein <sup>Said rigid</sup> ~~the rigid~~ shaft is operably connected to a fixture at the proximal end of the device. ]

13. ) The device of claim 8 wherein said shaft means is further comprised at a telescope release mechanism surrounding a housing. ]

14. [ The device of claim 8 wherein said contact member has a frame, a spring mechanism, and a frame extension operably connected to said frame and said spring mechanism. ]

15. ) The device of claim 8 wherein said shaft means is connected to a single contact member. ]

16. [ The device of claim <sup>8 comprising</sup> ~~15~~ having a pair of shaft means interconnected by a pivot at an intermediate point of said shaft means. ]

ED 8 <sup>SAID</sup> [The device of claim ~~15~~ wherein ~~the said~~ shaft means is adjustable along its length by continuous positioning of a first portion of said shaft means which engages a second portion and moves slidably in relation thereto.]

18. [The device of claim 17 wherein said shaft means is further comprised of a spring mechanism disposed between said first and second portions of said shaft means and wherein said spring mechanism surrounds a rigid shaft connected to one of said first and second shaft members.]

ED 19. [A device for use in cardiac surgery comprising:  
means for stabilizing the beating heart comprising a sheath member having support attachments positioned along its length.]

ED 20. [The device of claim 19 wherein the support attachments are inflatable.]

21. [The device of claim 20 wherein the sheath member has at least one lumen connected to said inflatable support attachments.]

ED 22. [The device of claim 19 in combination with a rib retractor wherein a portion of said sheath member is attached to said retractor.]